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Arguing that the Congress cannot keep kicking the contentious immigration issue down the road, Rep. Harry Mitchell, an Arizona Democrat from the Scottsdale/Phoenix area, introduced legislation on May 20 that would call for the deployment of 3,000 National Guard troops along the U.S.-Mexican border to support the border control activities of U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The measure, H.R. 5357, which Rep. Mitchell characterized as "bipartisan legislation" because its sole cosponsor is a Republican, Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, of California.

"The Federal government has a responsibility to secure the border, and it simply hasn't done it," Rep. Mitchell told his colleagues in a floor speech delivered on May 20. "As a result, we are once again facing an emergency. Not just an emergency at the border, I might add, but an emergency in the interior - in places like Phoenix, where smugglers and Mexican drug cartels have set up vast networks of drop house, which operate as way stations for their illegal activities."

"The crime and violence associated with these drop houses is horrendous," Mitchell continued. "Phoenix has become a kidnapping capital."

H.R. 5357 calls for an "immediate increase" of 3,000 National Guard troops along the border, and maintenance of those additional troops through the end of 2011.

"The National Guard has successfully assisted with border security in the past," Rep. Mitchell argued. "Operation Jump Start, which concluded its mission in 2008 proved remarkably effective. According to the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, the Yuma Sector experienced a 68-percent decrease in apprehensions between October 1, 2006 and July 31, 2007, compared with the previous year," he said

"Border-wide, the National Guard helped seize more than 1,080 vehicles used to transport drugs and/or illegal immigrants, more than 300,600 pounds of marijuana, and 5,060 pounds of cocaine," Mitchell added.

The legislation was referred to the House Armed Services Committee, which has jurisdiction over the National Guard.